

# Turning (Changing) Hearts in the End Time



## SABBATH—MARCH 18

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** 1 Kings 16:29–17:24; Malachi 4:5, 6; Matthew 3:2; Matthew 11:14, 15; Matthew 17:10; Matthew 18:20-45.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘I [God] will send you the prophet Elijah. He will come before the day of the Lord arrives. It will be a great and terrifying day. Elijah will teach parents how to love their children. He will also teach children to honor their parents. And I will put a curse on the land’ ” (Malachi 4:5, 6, NIV).

**A BOY RAN AWAY FROM HOME.** After years of not hearing from him, the parents got a postcard. Their son was coming their way and wanted to see them. He wrote, “I will be riding the train that runs behind our house. If it is OK for me to stop and see you, hang a white handkerchief on the fence. Then I will get off at the next station. If the handkerchief is not there, I will just keep riding.”

As the train traveled toward his boyhood home, the son wondered, *Will the handkerchief be there?* Finally, he saw the fence. It was covered with handkerchiefs, towels, bedsheets, and pillowcases. The bushes and trees also were covered with pieces of white cloth. What a great way to be welcomed home.

We are God's children. And He wants us to come home to Him as much as this boy's parents wanted him to come home to them.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** In the closing verses of the Old Testament, a heart-turning work by Elijah is foreseen before the Lord comes.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 25.

**SUNDAY—MARCH 19**

**THE PROPHECY OF TURNED  
(CHANGED) HEARTS  
(Malachi 4:5, 6).**

**Compare<sup>1</sup> the prophecy about the coming of Elijah in Malachi 4:5, 6 with the following New Testament verses. Matthew 11:14, 15; Matthew 17:10; Mark 6:15; Luke 1:17.**

In the days of Malachi, God said to Israel, “ ‘Return to me. Then I will return to you.’ ” But the people asked, “ ‘How can we return?’ ” (Malachi 3:7, NIV). Malachi then announced that they would receive one more chance for revival.<sup>2</sup> Malachi remembered that Elijah started a heart-turning reformation<sup>3</sup> (1 Kings 18:37). So Malachi prophesied that Elijah would come again to “ ‘turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers’ ” (Malachi 4:6, NIV).

The Jewish people believed that Elijah would appear personally as the Messiah’s messenger (Matthew 17:10; Mark 6:15). But the New Testament says that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy (Matthew 11:14, 15; Luke 1:17).

**What do you think the words**

**“turn (change) the hearts” mean?**

These words have several meanings. (1) They mean that the people of Israel are to be restored<sup>4</sup> to the Lord. God as Father (Isaiah 63:16) has turned from His anger toward His children (Micah 7:18, 19). He calls them to return to Him (Isaiah 44:22; Malachi 3:7). (2) These words mean that the future generations<sup>5</sup> are reunited with their faithful forefathers through covenant (promise) renewal. The Old Testament often called for God’s people to follow the faith of the Bible leaders. Whether the land continued as a blessed home depended on how faithful the people were to God’s covenant (Deuteronomy 4:29-31). (3) The words mean that family relationships<sup>6</sup> are restored and renewed. Family relationships can be restored when we are faithful to God. Fulfilling one’s responsibilities to parents and children is closely tied to continually receiving the Promised Land and God’s blessing (Proverbs 2:21).

**What is the connection between a restored relationship with God and restored relationships in our families? Why must we have a restored relationship with God before we can have restored relationships with our families?**

<sup>1</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

<sup>2</sup>revival—a chance to rededicate lives to Christ.

<sup>3</sup>reformation—people changing their spiritual life so they can have a better connection to God.

<sup>4</sup>restored—to have made something as it was before sin appeared.

<sup>5</sup>generations—future children; grandchildren; great-grandchildren; et cetera.

<sup>6</sup>relationships—the connections we have with people.

**MONDAY—MARCH 20****FAMILY REUNION  
(1 Kings 16:29–17:24).**

Jezebel was King Ahab's wife. She came from Sidon. She introduced Baal worship<sup>7</sup> to Israel. She caused the nation of Israel to slide faster toward idol worship. The teachings of God that honored marriage, family, and sexuality were stained by the use of prostitutes<sup>8</sup> and illegal sex. But Elijah stepped into the fight against idol worship. His name means "Jehovah-is-my-God." So his name is a rebuke to Baal.

**What experience helped Elijah overturn wrong beliefs and bring new life to families? 1 Kings 16:29–17:24; Luke 4:25, 26.**

Elijah announced the famine.<sup>9</sup> So people hated him. But God protected him in a poor widow's dwelling in Zarephath of Sidon, near Jezebel's hometown. Elijah greeted the widow with a hard test. She was to use her last bits of wood, oil, and flour to feed him and to trust God for her future. Her faith became famous. Jesus Himself would later praise her (Luke 4:26). As her oil and meal lasted for many days, the woman came to understand more about God. Then, sadly, the widow's only son died. Her words in 1 Kings 17:18 show that the false religion of Sidon required child

sacrifice (Jeremiah 19:5; Micah 6:7).

**How did the reunion with her son influence the widow spiritually? 1 Kings 17:24. What can we learn from her words?**



**“ ‘Now I know that you are a man of God’ ”  
(1Kings 17:24, NIV).**

Now the widow's words show the results of the Elijah message. Faith in God and His Word arises in the heart. At the same time, by His power, life is restored and the family is reunited. Many today may say yes to the doctrines<sup>10</sup> that are preached. But they are lukewarm in their spiritual experience. Revival and restoration<sup>11</sup> can take place in the home only when believers personally experience the truth in the Bible.

**What are some family reunions that you are still waiting for? What**

<sup>7</sup>Baal worship—one form of idol worship.

<sup>8</sup>prostitutes—people who earn a living having sex.

<sup>9</sup>famine—not having enough food.

<sup>10</sup>doctrines—church beliefs.

<sup>11</sup>restoration—a return to the way things were before sin appeared.

**promises of God are giving you hope that these reunions will take place?**

## **TUESDAY—MARCH 21**

### **TURNING (CHANGING) HEARTS AT THE ALTAR (1 Kings 18:20-45).**

**How does 1 Kings 18:20-45 speak of family life?**

On Mount Carmel, Elijah wanted Israel to go back to the faith of their fathers. This would bring healing to their lives, their homes, and their land.

*The hour of the evening sacrifice.* The priests of Baal failed to make their sacrifice work. So Elijah took his turn. He was careful. The time of day caused people to think about God's plan of salvation as it was shown in the sanctuary service (Exodus 29:41). The invitation " 'Come near to me' " (1 Kings 18:30, NKJV) reminds us of Jesus welcoming sinners (Matthew 11:28). Parents may feel bad about a child's disobedience. But they can receive comfort knowing that God loves that child as truly as He loved the Israelites. God never stops trying to bring rebellious ones back to Him.

Elijah's focus on God's altar is the same as when families in our time uplift Jesus and His saving grace during family worship. Family worship is a chance to talk to Jesus in prayer. During family worship, we can speak of Him to one another, receive anew His free gift of salvation, and give our hearts time to think about His teachings.

The answer that Elijah asked for from God would show that God had taken Israel back. First Kings 18:37 says, " 'Then these people know . . . that you are turning their hearts back to you again' " (NIRV). We cannot turn our hearts to God. We can only accept His grace, which He freely gives.

The fire did not fall upon the guilty. Instead, it fell upon the sacrifice. The sacrifice pointed to Jesus, who was made "sin for us, so we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIRV). Confession and praise came from the people's lips. Because they did not accept God's call, the priests of Baal were killed. Then refreshing rains ended the curse upon the land.

**In what condition is your home altar? How can you rebuild the altar in your home?**



**Turn your heart back to God. Accept His grace.**

**WEDNESDAY—MARCH 22****TURNING (CHANGING) HEARTS  
AT THE JORDAN  
(Luke 3:1-3, 7-14).**

An angel prophesied to Zachariah about John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-17). Jesus supported the idea that John the Baptist would be like Elijah (Matthew 11:14; Matthew 17:12, 13). The Gospel writers<sup>12</sup> claim that John the Baptist was the “messenger” who would prepare the way of the Lord (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27; Malachi 3:1).

**Note the important parts of John’s message. How was his message a message of “heart-turning”? Matthew 3:1, 2, 7, 8; Matthew 14:1-4; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:1-3, 7-8, 14.**

A farmer plows hard ground so it will be soft for the seed. In the same way, John spoke against sin and encouraged sinners to repent.<sup>13</sup> It is human nature for people to think they do not need to improve themselves morally. John’s message turned people toward the holiness of God’s requirements. John also made them realize their need of God’s perfect righteousness (holiness). True repentance<sup>14</sup> always comes with a humble spirit and a desire for God to change one’s behavior. John exposed the shallow, self-centered hypocrisy<sup>15</sup> of

those who claimed to be God’s chosen people. He tried to show them the deeper meaning of faith in God.



**A farmer prepares the ground for the seed.  
Prepare your heart for Christ.**

**How did John the Baptist’s message prepare the way for Jesus? John 1:35-37; John 3:27-30.**

God showed John that Jesus was the Lamb of God. When John introduced Jesus this way (John 1:29, 36), he brought people to Jesus. Andrew and another John (the Gospel writer who wrote the book of John) left the Baptist’s side and became Jesus’ first disciples. The Elijah message shows the need for repentance. It points to the One who saves from sin. It also stirs up excitement about Him and introduces people to Him.

**If John the Baptist were to step into your home, what do you think he would say to you?**

<sup>12</sup>Gospel writers—the people who wrote the Gospels. The Gospels are the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

<sup>13</sup>repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins with the help of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>14</sup>repentance—being sorry for your sins, wanting to stop sinning, and turning away from your sins.

<sup>15</sup>hypocrisy—when you say you believe something, but then act as if you do not believe.

**THURSDAY—MARCH 23****TURNING (CHANGING) HEARTS  
IN THE LAST DAYS (Luke 1:17).**

In a way, we Adventists see ourselves as John the Baptist. John was the messenger of the reform<sup>16</sup> and repentance needed to prepare the way for Jesus' first coming. We as Adventists are the messengers of the reform and repentance needed to prepare the way for the Second Coming.

**How does Luke 1:17 state our Adventist message?**

The heavenly Father has turned the hearts of His children back to Himself. He has turned the hearts of His children to each other through the Cross. The Elijah message asks families to believe the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 2:11-18). The Elijah message also encourages families to be people filled with grace as God's Holy Spirit helps them to grow spiritually.

The world greatly needs examples of unselfishness, loyalty, and faithfulness to God. By God's grace, Christian families can be such examples. But we must remember that the message we have for the world is also the message for ourselves. We need to show that we understand the principles of the gospel. These principles<sup>17</sup> are unity, love, and self-sacrifice, especially

among our own families. If we show these principles in our families, we will be able to share Elijah's message with others. Excellent sermons are not enough. The world needs to see the gospel's principles at work in our lives. John the Baptist had a power that helped his preaching change lives. We can have the same power through God's grace if we are willing to cooperate with Him.

**How is your family an example of unselfishness, loyalty, and faithfulness?**

Through Jesus, we are part of the family in heaven (Ephesians 3:15). If we are a family of one or more, we are called to be witnesses<sup>18</sup> for God. Nothing can make our witness<sup>19</sup> more powerful than to show the world what a family can be and do through the power of the gospel.

**What can you do to show those closest to you that you love and care about them?**

<sup>16</sup>reform—an improved connection with God.

<sup>17</sup>principles—basic rules.

<sup>18</sup>witnesses—people who tell other people about Christ and who live a life that shows they believe in Christ.

<sup>19</sup>witness—the things we do and say that tell people about Jesus.

**FRIDAY—MARCH 24**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, “Carmel,” *Prophets and Kings* pp. 143–154; “The Voice in the Wilderness,” *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 97–108.

*A message to prepare a people:* “Our message must be as direct and powerful as John’s. John rebuked kings for their sins. No matter how much danger his life was in, he never tried to cover up the truth. Our work today must be as faithfully done as John’s.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1184.

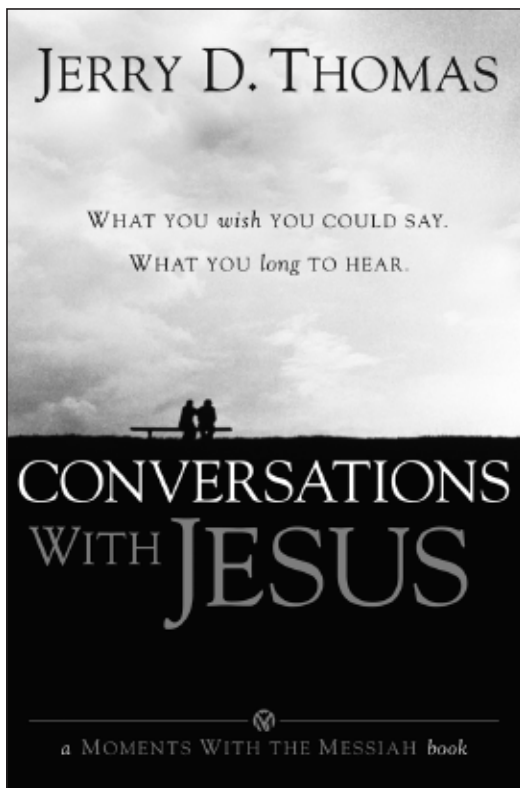
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. As a class, discuss how meaningful the Elijah message is to your local church. What can you do to help your church understand the message and your church duty in helping to spread it?
2. Ask some class members to share their experiences of having their

“hearts turned (changed).” What changes did they experience? What difference did these changes make in their lives and the lives of their families?

3. If we see ourselves as John the Baptist, what should we expect to happen to us? What does your answer tell you about what it means to be a Christian?
4. As a class, work on a paragraph called a Declaration of Family Principles. In this paragraph, summarize what the Bible’s idea for a family is. Be prepared to share your paragraph with the whole church.

**SUMMARY:** A call for faith in God and acceptance of His gospel of grace is going forth today just before Christ returns. Accepting this call makes stronger the connection between Christians and their heavenly Father. Accepting this call also makes stronger the connection between earthly parents and their children.



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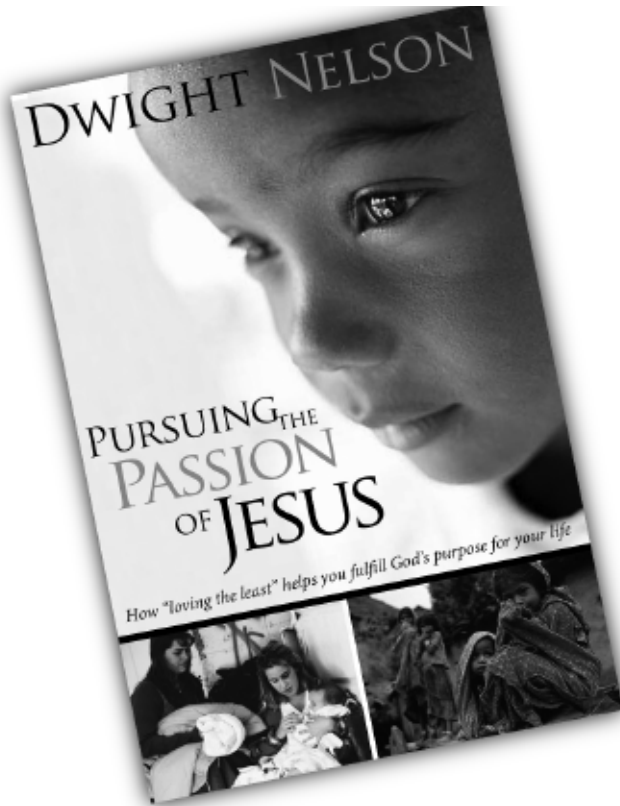
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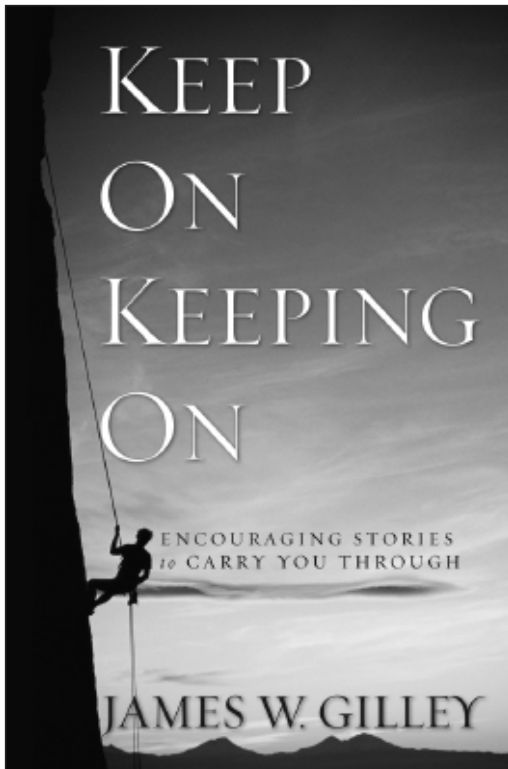
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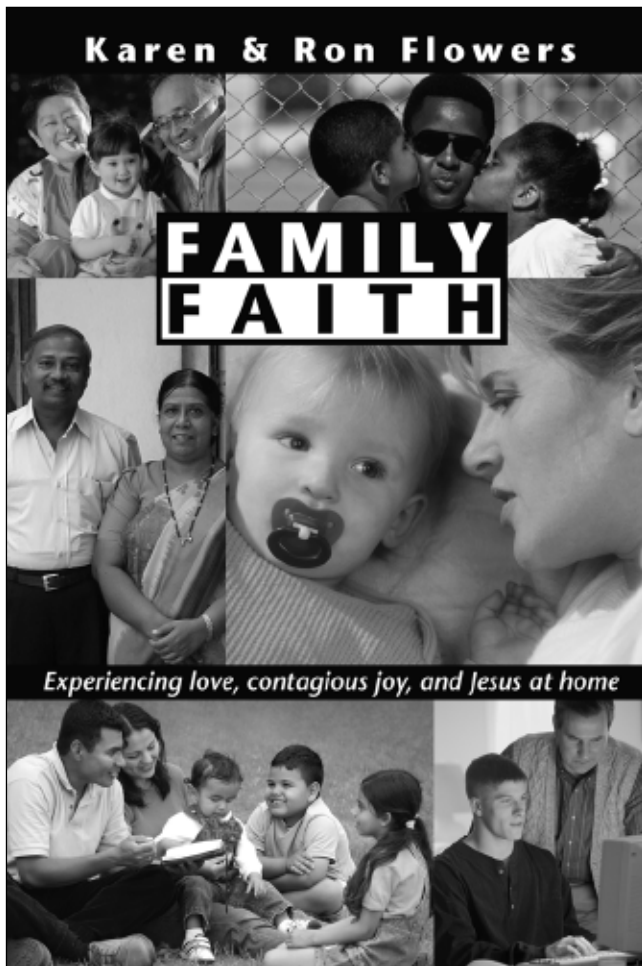
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